

ComputerEdge™ Online — 07/02/10



This issue: The State of Linux

Whether portable or on the desktop, Linux is hotter than ever. Here's a look at the current state of Linux in mobile devices and on thumb drives.

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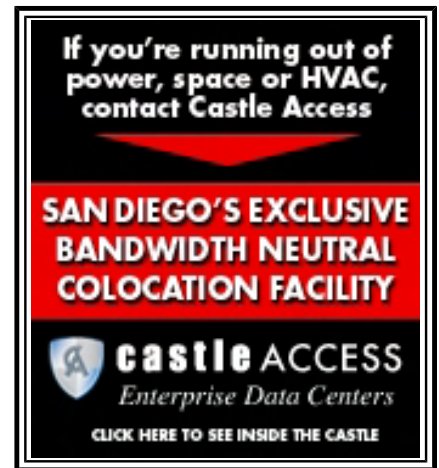
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Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.

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Digital Dave

"Digital Dave answers your tech questions." by *Digital Dave*

A reader wonders whether he should delete old Windows update files; a reader faces an error message when sending out e-mail in Outlook Express; a USB hub is causing confusion.

Dear Digital Dave,

I think you've answered this before, but I can't find it.

Can the various update files (KBxxxxxx) ever be deleted? I think they are simply patch files and after they have been applied they are no longer needed, but I'm not certain. There are about 450 of them on my machine and I'd like to get rid of them if I can.

*Roger Wolfe
San Diego, CA*

Dear Roger,

The KBxxxxxx files in the Windows folder on Windows XP machines are text files (can be read with Notepad), which contain information on specific Windows updates. My understanding is that they are used for uninstalling updates, but if they don't appear in the Show Updates (check box) portion of the Add or Remove Programs feature, they are no longer necessary since they are now orphaned. Some people advocate waiting a couple of months after an update to delete the files. I have a different take. Why delete them at all?

Since they are text files, they don't take up very much space—about 14 kilobytes each. If you deleted all 450 of your KBxxxxxx files, you would recover only about six megabytes of space. Today, that's not very much even on a small hard drive. Those files were initially placed there for a reason. While the reason may no longer exist for some of the files, there is not much to be gained by removing them.

The letters KB stand for Knowledge Base. Microsoft uses the KBxxxxxx as a label for specific Windows updates. If you search on the label at the Microsoft Support Site (support.microsoft.com/), you can immediately get information about the update and usually a link to the download.

The system in Windows Vista and Windows 7 has changed enough that you will no longer find KBxxxxxx files lying around in the Windows folder. Most of the Windows Update systems are automatic and—other than deciding whether to update or not—should not be messed with. Randomly guessing that files are no longer required has gotten many people into trouble. I recommend leaving well enough alone. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have been a fan of yours and a subscriber to ComputerEdge for more years than I like to count. Well, I finally have a question for you: I use Outlook Express 6 and everything has been fine until yesterday, when all of a sudden the error message below popped up. What does it mean and how do I get rid of it? I "Googled" it, but that didn't work. What should I do? I can't send e-mail.

An unknown error has occurred. Account: 'pop.sbcglobal.yahoo.com', Server: 'smtp.att.yahoo.com', Protocol: SMTP, Server Response: '502 Command not implemented', Port: 25, Secure (SSL): Yes, Server Error: 502, Error Number: 0x800CCC64

Thanks for your help.

*Gabby DeDonato
San Clemente, CA*

Dear Gabby,

I suspect that one of the settings in your Outlook Express has gone wrong. The clue is in the "Secure(SSL)" portion of the error message. Most e-mail servers are not set up for secure e-mail. Therefore, you can't set up an account for sending secure e-mail without getting an error. You need to check that your e-mail account has not fallen into the mode.

Select "Account..." from the Tools menu. Highlight the problem account and click the Properties button. Select the Advanced tab from the Properties window. Make sure that the "This server requires a secure connection (SSL)" box is *not* checked. (Check and uncheck if the box is empty.) Click Apply. Now close all the extra windows and try again.

If that doesn't work, copy down the key settings in the account (user name, password, POP3 and SMTP servers, etc.), delete the old account and try setting it up again with the default values.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a powered USB hub, and do not know what is happening. If I turn the hub on before the computer, the computer "on" light is lit. It appears that the hub is powering the computer. Also, I have an external hard drive that the computer sees after it has booted—as the AutoPlay window appears. I see this only when I boot the hard drive after the computer is up and running.

Can you help?

*Jerry Waddell
San Diego, CA*

Dear Jerry,

USB ports carry power for attached devices. However, depending upon how the USB ports are set up and how many devices require power, the power from the computer may not be adequate. That's why USB hubs will usually have an external power source. Power on a USB port is a two-way street. Just as a device can draw power from the computer, the USB hub can supply the same type of power to the computer's USB port. This is why the light on the computer comes on.

However, the computer would not be able to operate from the external USB hub power. Even if the circuitry would allow it, the amount of power would be inadequate.

Generally, you would only see the AutoPlay window when you attach a USB drive after the computer is already running. The computer assumes that it is a new device. If the drive is plugged in prior to booting, then the computer will treat it as a regular installed device and not open the AutoPlay window—although you should be able to access the the drive.

Digital Dave

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Linux and Mobile Open Source

“With Android, open source is holding its own on the mobile front.” by Pete Choppin

Open source has, for now, a unique position in the mobile space. In just about every conceivable area, open source is a major player, keeping big boys like Microsoft and Apple in check. And that is a good thing.

One of my many varied tasks at work is the management of all mobile phones and devices. To keep my sanity, among other things, I try to keep our list of approved devices to a minimum. But already, our users are asking about the Motorola Droid, the Android and the iPhone. I can hardly blame them. Our mobile world is only expanding and everyone is looking for the coolest and newest devices.

And while Microsoft is finally getting a clue and incorporating its Zune media playing and Xbox game capability into its new Windows Mobile (www.computerworld.com/s/article/9156918/Microsoft_CEO_unveils_Windows_Phone_7), mobile Linux is making its own improvements.

From our users' perspective—and quite frankly, from mine—there really hasn't been a viable open source platform for mobile devices that can be called "market ready." Sure, there was the Yopi device in the late '90s that was based on Linux, and we can't forget the famous Compaq iPAQ Pocket PC that had a Linux build floating around for a while. These and other attempts to use open source to power a device for public consumption just never took off. Until now, that is. Google's Android is, of course, open source and based on Linux. It is taking off in a big way, to the point that some people claim it will be the king of smartphones in just a few years, passing Windows Mobile, BlackBerry and the iPhone.

Whether or not Android can pull that off is irrelevant. It has changed the smartphone landscape probably more than any open-source project has changed any other market. HTC and Motorola

have jumped in with Android devices (www.linuxfordevices.com/c/a/Linux-For-Devices-Articles/Linux-Mobile-Phones/) in a big way, as have other handset makers.

Where is Linux?

It makes you wonder why open source hasn't taken off as well in other areas, namely the desktop. Linux is a serious contender with real market share on servers and embedded devices like firewalls and routers, but when it comes to the desktop, you'd be hard pressed to find someone running Linux on their PC in your neighborhood. You may find a few that have it installed in a virtual machine or in a multiboot situation (I'm guilty here), but probably not too many who use it exclusively, or even primarily. Even open-source application software such as OpenOffice.org hasn't made that large of an impact.

Part of the reason for this may just be expectations. People expect to be able to run certain pieces of software. iTunes, Quicken, Office and Photoshop are just a few examples. You can generally load these onto a Mac or Windows PC with no problem. There are open-source alternatives to many of these that run fine on Linux, but they aren't the same thing—they aren't what people expect. People don't run Windows, they run *applications* and they want an OS that will support their apps.

The Mobile Phone Market

Conversely, there is the mobile phone market. People are used to getting a new phone every year or so and have come to expect it won't work much like their previous phone. It just needs to do what they are used to doing—making calls, storing contacts, e-mail, Web browsing, etc. The cooler it looks, the better. Until the iPhone launched, third-party apps being installed on phones was a relatively minor phenomenon. Windows Mobile and PalmOS supported it, but you'd be surprised how many people never installed the first thing on those phones. I knew there were apps available for the Windows Mobile device, but personally, I felt it was too much of a pain. You have to get desktop connectivity software (Active Sync) to dock the device, or use a USB connection, and install apps from the PC side, so you still rely on the PC. The iPhone App Store changed all of that in 2008 and now everyone expects to be able to install apps on their phone.

Until there is a killer app that will keep people anchored to a single platform, a well-funded open source platform will thrive. I don't think there will ever be a killer app like that for phones. I think the only thing that will keep the number of mobile operating systems in check is the carrier's willingness to support them. The key players today are Symbian, Windows Mobile, BlackBerry, iPhone, WebOS and Android. Each is just as viable as the other. I personally think that is too many, but I'd wager that even if that amount was cut in half, Android would be one of them because of the advantages open source offers when it comes to flexibility and customizations, both of which are far more important on a phone than a PC.

The point is open source has, for now, a unique position in the mobile space. In just about every conceivable area, open source is a major player, keeping big boys like Microsoft and Apple in check. And that is a good thing.

Beyond Cell Phones



Talk has it that netbook manufacturers will offer Android as an alternative to the



household staple from Redmond. It is too early to say whether the netbooks will stick as a viable platform, but Android would be a fantastic platform for netbooks.

Lightweight in hardware, software and inexpensive (free), an Android-powered netbook offers mobility, connectivity and capability. Application support, the challenge of most new platforms, is really not a problem. Just visit the Android Market where new applications are being launched daily by developers around the globe. Add a Terminal Services or Citrix client to Android so a business user can access the corporate network while traveling and you've got a great mobile platform for the entire market, be it a phone or a netbook. I also think Android also has a future as an embedded OS for appliances like printers and entertainment units, but let's save that discussion for another day.

Android is a Linux platform—great, but what exactly does that mean? Android runs atop a Linux kernel with a layered subsystem providing core computing services. Process and memory management are provided by Linux. User space applications are written in Java and even Android's built-in applications are written just like the applications developers write for the platform.

Is Android the perfect mobile software platform? Can it dethrone iPhone? Well, perhaps that is not a fair or even relevant question.

The first challenge for Android is to establish itself as a platform deserving to stay—and I think it has made very good strides in this direction thus far. If new devices rumored to arrive on the market actually show up and bring smartphone-like features to the masses, things are going to be pretty exciting.

What all this adds up to is that even more Linux mobile devices like Motorola's Droid and Devour will be coming soon. In addition, you can expect to see a slew of mobile Linux-powered netbooks and the first samples of, yes, the Linux-powered answers to Apple's iPad tablet.

Android has shown that not only can open source be a viable platform, it can actually compete with the big players. Again, what I think is even more important is that open source developers understand that true innovation in computing is not restricted to private silos, no matter how big. They are opening up this platform to the broader community.

Linux and open source have always championed the idea of one well-supported, well-designed project that addresses cross-platform, cross-device and cross-architecture development. The fact that open source is holding its own on the mobile front is a good sign that things are moving in the right direction.

Pete Choppin has been an IT Professional for over 15 years. He currently works as a network and systems administrator for a company called Albion based in Clearfield, Utah. He has experience in all types of hardware, software, and networking technologies. He is proficient in many operating systems including Linux, Windows and Macintosh. His interests include cooking, sci-fi, computers and technology, and Web design—a semi-professional endeavor, having designed Web sites in the dental field, e-commerce businesses, and for the Boy Scouts of America.

Pete has been a devout reader of *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and contributes regularly to featured articles as well as the Linux Lessons section of *ComputerEdge*. He can be contacted at *pchoppin@comcast.net* but prefers to have comments on *ComputerEdge* articles submitted to the editor and posted for the benefit of all readers.

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Linux on a Thumb Drive

“The evolution of portable Linux continues.” by Michael J. Ross

Portable Linux distributions on a thumb drive can be an excellent alternative to lugging a laptop with you—provided that you have some sort of computer to plug it into.

Of all the computer operating systems that are adequate candidates for running file servers (whether connected to the Internet or not), Linux has established itself as a favorite, for many reasons: It is built upon the same principles that made Unix the best choice decades ago. It is free to use and modify, thereby allowing companies, other organizations, and individuals to avoid the licensing fees associated with proprietary server-ready operating systems. It is a shining example of free open source software (FOSS), which means that anyone can examine the source code at any time to make customizations as needed, and to check for potential security holes. Having countless programmers the world over examining the underlying code has proven to be quite beneficial.



Ralph heard that he can get Linux on his computer by booting a thumb drive with Linux installed.

Incidentally, there is still some controversy over whether the term "Linux" should be used to refer only to the operating system's core, known as the "kernel," or to refer to the entire operating system. Only terminology purists insist upon the former, while the rest of the world now goes with the latter, and in this article we will do the same. Each edition of Linux is known as a "distribution" or "distro." Some distros are optimized for high security uses, while others are stripped down in size in order to consume fewer resources, such as disk space and system memory.

Proponents can point out that Linux is already lean, particularly compared to Microsoft Windows Server, its nearest rival. But that has not slowed down efforts to create distros that are even leaner and faster, and thus are ideal for use with older computers that are capable of running only smaller operating systems (such as the venerable DOS, or even Windows 3.1), but would never be able to support any of the more modern versions of Windows (especially the piggish Vista). As you might expect, the lightweight distros also turn out to be the best candidates for running on the increasing variety of mobile devices that do not have built-in operating systems.

Pocket-Sized OS

Everyone is familiar with USB thumb drives (also referred to as "flash drives," "USB sticks" and other permutations). They initially started out years ago with relatively small storage capacity,

but it didn't take long for them to reach 128 gigabytes (as of this writing), which is remarkable when you consider that hard drives had yet to reach that storage capacity not terribly long ago. The match-up of Linux with thumb drives was inevitable, given that smaller Linux distros were gaining greater attention and usage at the same time that thumb drives were continually getting larger storage capacities.

There are numerous advantages to being able to install a Linux distro on a thumb drive. As an example, imagine that you are being sent to an overseas field office of your company, but you don't want to drag a laptop with you, because of the dangers of theft, environmental damage, the hassles of border checks, etc. Yet you still need to bring all of the data with you to perform your job, and it would be even better to not rely upon whatever operating system and software your foreign colleagues might make available. In these cases, having a lean version of Linux on a thumb drive would be so much more convenient than a laptop, regardless of how lightweight its vendor might claim it to be.

Other problems can crop up when you rely upon the technical support staff in an overseas office—and I speak from experience. You don't want to waste the time in setting up your preferred development and testing environment on someone else's computer, especially if time is limited. It would be so much better if you had all of your preferred applications and their settings—including your countless Web browser bookmarks and saved passwords—with you the moment that you arrived, so you can hit the ground running.

If you are sure that your destination will be blessed with a powerful computer preloaded with your favorite programs, and you won't have to share that machine with anyone else, then it might make sense to bring only the necessary data on your thumb drive, without an accompanying operating system. But there is always the chance that it would be advantageous to use PCs in other locations, and more than likely they will not be installed with the latest security applications—including those needed to detect spyware, viruses and other malware. Bringing your own secure operating system is the surest approach.

Linux Goes Live

To fully appreciate the progress that has been achieved in putting Linux in a pocket, consider the history of the efforts to make Linux portable in any form. After all, distros on thumb drives were not the first wave of pioneering technologies in lightweight Linux computing. Instead, that honor goes to the so-called "live CDs," which were the Linux distros that were made small enough so that they could be written to CD-Rs and CD-RWs, and also bootable by PCs. Because all modern PCs can be made to boot off of an optical drive (via settings in the system's BIOS), you can simply write the chosen Linux ISO file to an optical disc, pop it in the drive, and then boot off that disc. One of the earliest producers of live CDs was Knoppix (www.knoppix.net).

These CDs make it possible to run Linux on any newer PC, even if it has only Windows installed on its hard drive. Consequently, you could try out the latest portable Linux distro without being obliged to assign it to its own partition, and spend the time and effort installing it on the hard drive, as well as figuring out how to boot off of the new operating system in addition to the pre-existing Windows instance. Dual-booting of multiple versions of Windows only is far less complicated than introducing a non-Windows operating system into the mix.

Knoppix, and the other CD-capable distros, do have some limitations. Although you can run all of the Linux applications—such as a Web browser—off of the optical disc, you cannot save changes within the operating system to the disc. Some of the distros were modified so that you could, if needed, store settings on a diskette, to be reused the next time that you booted off that disc. But now that diskettes are going the way of the dodo bird, saving any configuration to the hard drive may be the only option, assuming it is possible.

In the evolution of portable Linux, the next phase was the creation of distros that can run on a thumb drive, which is possible because newer PCs—even palmtops—can be configured to boot off of USB devices. That was a big step forward, but unfortunately those distros were not able to save application changes to those USB devices. Admittedly, this downside would have posed less of a problem in the years ahead, as more user applications and data transition from the desktop to the Web. Yet at the time, the majority of user data was still saved locally. As a result, these static Linux distros on thumb drives were of value mainly to people who restricted their computing activities to surfing the Web, checking online e-mail accounts, and anything else that could be accomplished using a vanilla environment that could not be customized on the go. These users could write data to their thumb drives at home, before hitting the road, and later upload that data to the Web; but they couldn't download and save files to their thumb drive.

Yet it didn't take long for Linux developers to modify portable distros so that they could not only operate on USB flash drives, but the operating system configuration could be modified as needed, and user data could be saved to the drive, including files downloaded from the Web. These distros are capable of doing this because they are employing a memory overlay system that makes possible the dynamic storage of data on the same drive as the operating system itself. These Linux distros include Fedora (fedoraproject.org/), Ubuntu (www.ubuntu.com/), Damn Small Linux (www.damnsmalllinux.org/), Puppy Linux (puppylinux.org/), and Xubuntu (www.xubuntu.org/). There are numerous others, but this list is a good place to start, and we will next take a look at those first two. Beware that some of these distros may necessitate UNetbootin (unetbootin.sourceforge.net/), which can be required to make a portable Linux desktop.

Distros on a Diet

In view of the fact that there are several portable Linux distributions from which you could choose, you may be wondering which of them, if any, have proven to be favorites among the Linux community. The four distros mentioned above, and all of the other ones not listed here, differ from one another in various ways—and thus each distro has its own advantages and disadvantages, as well as its own personality and community. Because of these differences, each one will have unique technical requirements for proper installation, such as the minimum storage size of the thumb drive, and the installation procedures. Consequently, we will not go into those details for each distro.

However, we certainly can examine some of the differences between two of the most widely used candidates, Ubuntu and Fedora. These two were selected partly based on their popularity: According to DistroWatch.com (distrowatch.com/), as of this writing, Ubuntu and Fedora are in the lead. This pair has also been chosen as a tip of the hat to their pioneering efforts and status in the realm of portable Linux.

Many years ago, the Ubuntu (www.ubuntu.com/) organization wisely decided that anyone on the Web could visit its site, enter an order for one or more copies of Ubuntu on CD-R, and the good folks at Ubuntu would send those discs, completely free of charge (even paying for the postage). Undoubtedly this proved to be a significant reason that propelled Ubuntu rapidly upward in popularity, volunteer involvement and industry attention. Furthermore, the organization's dedication to making everything free was much appreciated.

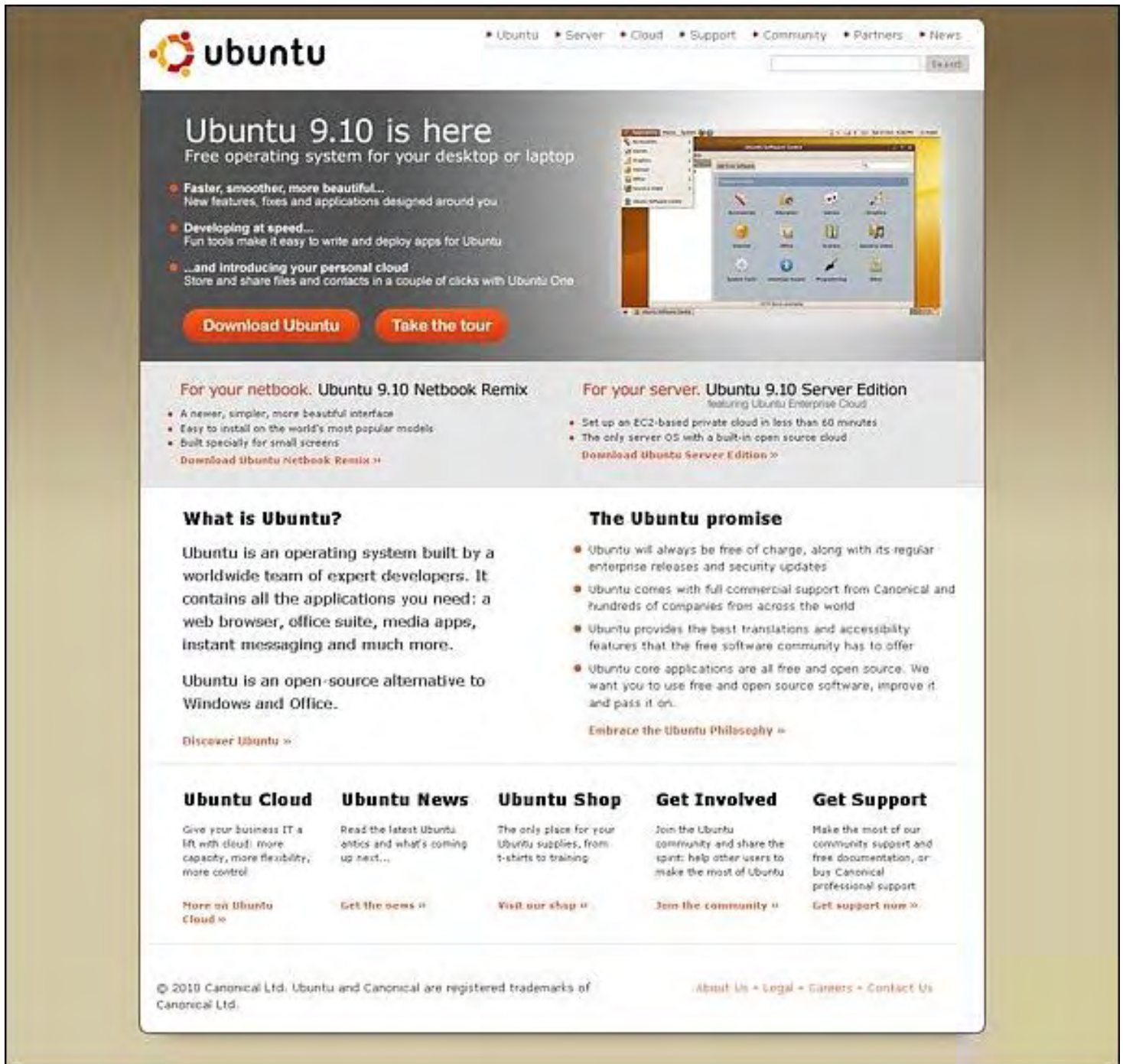


Figure 1. Ubuntu Web site.

Yet the CD campaign—which continues to this day—was just one component in Ubuntu's overall strategy. It didn't take long for this distro to gain a reputation for being complete, up to date, stable, easy to install, polished, and with a user community that is more friendly than the

typical Linux crowd. Their thumb stick-ready version is known as Ubuntu Netbook Remix (www.ubuntu.com/getubuntu/download-netbook) (UNR), and anyone interested in trying it out should consult the InstallationFromUSBStick page (help.ubuntu.com/community/Installation/FromUSBStick).

Fedora (fedoraproject.org/), owned by Red Hat, has an even longer history, and is considered one of the more well-respected and venerable distros available. However, during many of those years, it didn't exactly have a sterling reputation for stability, the way Ubuntu does. That's because the Fedora community has generally been more committed to keeping up with the latest changes in the Linux kernel and applications, even at the risk of causing more problems for people trying to install it and get their peripheral devices to work—which unfortunately has often been the Achilles heel for Linux adoption by power users.



Figure 2. Fedora Web site.

Fortunately, each version of Fedora is proving more stable than the last, with 11 and 12 cementing this distro as an excellent choice. To learn the details about how to create a bootable thumb drive based upon Fedora, be sure to check its "How Do I Make Fedora Media?" page (docs.fedoraproject.org/en-US/Fedora/13/html/Installation_Guide/Making_USB_Media.html) in the online documentation.

Regardless of which portable Linux distribution you choose, you will likely find that it can be an

excellent alternative to lugging a laptop with you—provided that you have some sort of computer to plug it into.

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer (www.ross.ws), writer, and freelance editor. He creates Web sites that help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into profitable online businesses.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Media Programs

“Options Galore for Streaming Video” by Jack Dunning

If you're intrigued by the concept of streaming video, such as that provided by Netflix (and others) directly to your computer, you have a variety of options to consider when creating a home-entertainment hub.

Last week in Edgeword, I discussed the impact of Netflix on the home entertainment and how the Internet is changing everything. The cable and satellite television companies and premium cable channels have plenty to worry about. In the not-too-distance future, they may be relegated to merely Internet providers with the Internet offering many more ways to deliver content to our televisions.

I've always been a lagger when it comes to home entertainment, but now that the PC is coming to the forefront in that arena, it's time I took more of an interest. I've been intrigued by the concept of streaming video such as that provided by Netflix (and others) directly to my computer. I took note last week when Marc Bacon mentioned in "A Look at a Home Theater Personal Computer (HTPC)" that he uses Windows Media Center to turn his computer into essentially a DVR for his entertainment system. Windows Media Center comes with two versions of Vista and most versions of Windows 7. What could be more convenient? However, I have some reservations.

Windows Media Center needs to be distinguished from Windows Media Player. Windows Media Center is a completely different animal from Media Player as it is designed to do much more than catalog and play videos, music and photo slide shows. Windows Media Center is intended to be the hub for home entertainment and the access point for Internet content. While I've been aware of Windows Media Center, until now I've never spent much time with it.

One of the reasons that I've avoided Windows Media Center is that, although it came on my Vista laptop, it has always run like a dog. Most of the time it's slow and I have trouble loading anything. This is probably likely a problem with Windows Vista, but I was also put off by the look and feel. I suspect that its operation is similar to the interface you find on the Xbox. It wheels and rolls much the way you would expect a video game to behave. This fits with the fact that one of the few ways to feed content from Windows Media Center to your television is via the Xbox game console. It may be that there is an update that would run better on my laptop.

On the other hand, the version of Windows Media Center that comes with almost all versions of

Windows 7 runs quite well on my Windows 7 computer. For this reason, any future discussion of Media Center will be with regard to the Windows 7 version.

Windows Media Center can be used with your television if the computer is directly connected or you use a Window Media Center Extender (MCX). The Media Center Extender is problematic in that there are only a couple of devices that act as extenders, such as the Xbox 360. Therefore, if you want to stream video using Windows Media Center from a computer in another room using a network, there are issues. I'm guessing that most people who are streaming to their TV via their computers are using alternative solutions.

Windows Media *Player* in Windows 7 (the other program) is designed for streaming under the DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance) standard, which is now being included in many of the networkable entertainment devices such as Blu-ray players. There is a Play To feature in Windows Media Player 12 that allows pushing content to DLNA-compliant devices over the network. This would be a way to remotely send recorded video to the television, Blu-ray player or other DLNA device from your Windows 7. (These issues are more complex than they should be, and I would appreciate any clarification provided about streaming from Windows computers to televisions.) Streaming video to the television from the Internet is a key concern. One feature that should be considered when buying devices that may be used for streaming is support for the DLNA standard.

From last week in Edgeward, the problem was making the Netflix connection from the Internet to the television. That means the television needs some way to reach the Internet. There are a number of alternatives for doing this. All these examples use some type of device connecting to your home network, thus making the Internet available. You must have a connection to the Internet for any type of Netflix streaming.

In my case, I'm looking for a Wi-Fi capability in my streaming device. Unless you have a house that's already hardwired for a network, you'll need to hook up via Wi-Fi. This is not a trivial issue, because many of the devices, while being Wi-Fi capable, do not have it installed.

If you own an Xbox, PS2, or Wii game consoles, you can immediately get going on your Netflix streaming. These boxes have become standard access points for a wide variety of content over the Internet. If you are not a gamer, then you will need to add a device to your entertainment system to connect to your home network.

The simplest way to get started is with a dedicated streaming box that includes Wi-Fi. The Roku Player (www.roku.com) (\$80-\$130) is built solely for streaming and includes Wi-Fi. However, Roku Player is not currently DLNA compliant. Both Seagate (www.seagate.com/www/en-us/products/home_entertainment/) and Western Digital (www.wdc.com/en/products/index.asp?cat=30) (the hard drive companies) build media players for streaming. They may or may not include Wi-Fi and/or hard drives depending upon the configuration, but both are now DLNA compliant, so you should be able to stream to them from your Windows 7 Media Player. If you have (or are planning to get in the near future) an HDTV, then make sure you get a device that supports HDTV. The low-priced Roku Player, at \$80, does not. My feeling is that I would pay a little more in case I get an HDTV at some time.

Blu-ray drives are commonly being built to support Netflix streaming. The advantage to the Blu-

ray drive is that you can play DVDs and stream with the same box. However, you will need to pay a little more, about \$200, if you want the Wi-Fi capability. Even if you don't think you will be using a streaming video service such as Netflix, if you're looking at Blu-ray drives with streaming capabilities, consider getting one with Wi-Fi built-in. You never know if you may change your mind. Most should be DLNA compliant for streaming from Windows 7, but check to be sure.

I'm not sure which direction is best for me. I'm still studying the situation. I'm leaning toward the Blu-ray player since it will also play DVDs. Any advice you may have would be helpful.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Linux on a Mac” by Wally Wang

Breathe new life into an aging PC by adopting Linux, or switch to the Mac and try Linux as a virtual machine. Also, why you shouldn't just rely on dry technical specifications when choosing a product; with Dragon Dictation and an Internet connection, you can dictate to your iPad; why depending too much on another company is rarely a reliable business strategy; and a tip on using the Target disk Mode button, which lets you treat a Macintosh as an external hard disk.

The first time I tried using Vista, I knew I had to find something better. The simplest solution was to avoid Vista and stick with Windows XP like most people did, but ultimately that would be a dead-end strategy. The next alternative was to install Linux on a separate disk partition and create a dual-boot system on my then-current PC, but that involved rebooting every time I wanted to switch operating systems.

VMware's Workstation (www.vmware.com/products/workstation) provided a better alternative by allowing me to run multiple operating systems within Windows XP. The first alternative operating system I tried was Red Hat Linux, otherwise known as Fedora (fedoraproject.org).

Fedora isn't a bad operating system, but it's nowhere friendly enough to use for the average person. A friendlier version of Fedora is Mandriva Linux (www2.mandriva.com), which started out as a modified version of Red Hat Linux designed for novices.

Mandriva Linux worked fine, but the main problem was its lack of recognition. If I were going to switch operating systems, I wanted something that could help me make money through learning its features.

I then tried SUSE Linux (www.opensuse.org/en), which was touted as a rival to Red Hat Linux. However, SUSE Linux didn't quite have the name-brand recognition as Red Hat Linux, so I switched to Ubuntu Linux (www.ubuntu.com).

The founder of Ubuntu Linux, Mark Shuttleworth, a South African multimillionaire, dedicated part of his fortune to supporting Ubuntu Linux to the point of sending out free CDs of Ubuntu Linux to anyone who asks for a copy. Unlike other Linux distributions like Red Hat or SUSE, Ubuntu Linux is completely free as both a desktop and server operating system. The company updates Ubuntu regularly and provides long-term support versions for those companies that require a stable version.

Given these advantages of free distribution and regular updates, Ubuntu Linux quickly became

the most popular Linux distribution around. However, Ubuntu Linux still lacked widespread popularity among book publishers and buyers. As much as I liked Ubuntu Linux, there just wasn't a profitable enough market for books or magazine articles about that particular operating system.

That's when I decided to switch completely to Mac OS X. Using both VMWare's Fusion (www.vmware.com/products/fusion) and Parallels (www.parallels.com), I could clone my Windows XP PC as a virtual machine, and migrate my Ubuntu Linux virtual machine to my Macintosh. Now my Macintosh could run Mac OS X, Windows XP and Ubuntu Linux.

The more I used Mac OS X, the less I used Windows XP and Ubuntu Linux. To save space, I simply created a Windows 2000 virtual machine, loaded the handful of Windows programs I wanted to run, then deleted my Windows XP virtual machine to save both disk space and memory usage (Windows XP needs at least 512MB while Windows 2000 needs only 256MB of RAM).

Since Linux still remains a niche operating system, I've simply adopted Mac OS X as my main operating system. Mac OS X has the reliability and stability of Linux with the popular support of Windows.

Best of all, Mac OS X is growing in popularity while Windows seems to be fading. Publications that catered exclusively to the Windows world of PCs have shriveled to shells of their former selves, such as PC Week (now called eWeek) and PC Magazine, which once resembled a small phone book, but now looks more like a monthly pamphlet.

Each launch of a new Microsoft product used to be a big media event. Not anymore. In case you didn't know it, Microsoft recently released Microsoft Office 2010 on June 15, yet hardly any media sites highlighted this launch. Microsoft has sold over 150 million copies of Windows 7 (www.networkworld.com/community/node/62913), yet despite the stability and profitability of Windows 7, Microsoft's stock can barely break the \$30 mark and rarely catches any noticeable press coverage.

Microsoft isn't going away any time soon, but it's clearly not captivating the public anymore either. As Windows slowly fades into the background, you can jump on the merry-go-round cycle of buying a new PC every time you want to run the latest version of Windows, or you can breathe new life into an aging PC by adopting Linux. Better yet, you can switch to the Macintosh, run a virtualization program like Fusion or Parallels, and migrate your existing Windows or Linux PCs as virtual machines on your Macintosh so you get the best of each operating system.

If you just want to use a computer without worrying about technical details, switch to the Macintosh. For those who prefer a more open system, there's no better option than switching to Linux on your current PC, either by replacing Windows altogether or running Linux through a virtualization program on Windows (or running Windows as a virtual machine inside a Linux PC for even greater stability). Linux may require more technical knowledge to use and customize, but it's definitely another choice if you're tired of wasting your time trying to keep Windows running properly.

Why Features Are Misleading

If you obsess over raw features, you might think it's obvious that an 8-megapixel camera would capture better images than a 5-megapixel camera. However, you'd also be wrong.

According to MacWorld's image comparison test (www.macworld.com/article/152314/2010/06/iphonecameras.html), the iPhone 4's 5-megapixel camera captured better images than the EVO 4G or Droid X, both of which offer 8-megapixel cameras.

Image Quality Rankings	
1. Samsung HZ35W (15MP point-and-shoot)	
2. Sony DSC-WX1 (10.2MP point-and-shoot)	
3. iPhone 4 (5MP smartphone)	
4. Droid X (8MP smartphone)	
5. EVO 4G (8MP smartphone)	
6. Samsung Galaxy (5MP smartphone)	
7. iPhone 3GS (3MP smartphone)	
Video Quality Rankings	
1. Flip Video M2120	
2. iPhone 4	
3. Sony DSC-WX1	
4. Samsung Galaxy	
5. Droid X	
6. Samsung HZ35W	
7. iPhone 3GS	
8. EVO 4G	

Figure 1. MacWorld's testing reveals that the iPhone 4 camera is superior to some higher megapixel cameras found in other phones.

In case you don't trust any bias MacWorld might have toward Apple, PC World (www.pcworld.com/article/199844/iphone_4_vs_droid_x_a_headtohead_comparison.html) also compared the iPhone 4 to the latest Motorola Droid X and found that the iPhone 4's 5-megapixel camera took better pictures than the Droid X's 8-megapixel camera, despite the seemingly massive difference in megapixel capabilities.

Focusing strictly on features and technical specifications is no substitute for actual results. A product can have the best technical specifications in the world, but if they fail to produce a satisfactory result, they're useless.

This is the reason why Apple's products often lead the market despite rarely adopting the latest technology. Rather than focus on promoting the latest technical features, Apple simply focuses on promoting the best results from existing technology. If that means using last year's technology to do it, what does it matter as long as the results are what you want?

Such feature-obsession is the reason why so many predicted the failure of the iPad because it lacked USB ports, replaceable batteries, or Flash support. Yet Apple has sold more than three million iPads in 80 days and still can't keep them in stock. People want a product for what it can do, not for an avalanche of cutting-edge features that mean nothing if they don't do anything worthwhile.

Apple didn't invent videoconferencing, but Apple did make it easier and more fun to use in the latest iPhone 4. To further help people use their FaceTime videoconferencing feature, Apple even offers a toll-free number you can call during business hours. Now you can test out FaceTime on your iPhone 4 in case you don't know of anyone else with an iPhone 4 you can call.



Figure 2. Apple provides a free service to let you test FaceTime on your iPhone 4.

By providing this free service, Apple encourages people to use videoconferencing. In comparison to other mobile phones that offer videoconferencing, the features are there but the manufacturers expect the users to figure out how to use it on their own. Essentially other manufacturers are telling users, "We crammed in every possible feature we could think of. Now it's up to you to discover that these features even exist, figure out how they work, and then try to use them. Who cares whether they work very well or not just as long as you have it?"

The next time you're comparing products, don't just rely on dry technical specifications to make your decision, but try each product for yourself. You may be surprised to discover that raw

technical specifications really don't matter that much after all.

Voice Recognition on the iPad

Although the virtual keyboard on the iPad works remarkably well after you get used to it, there's another option for inputting text into an iPad. Just download the free Dragon Dictation app and you can start speaking to your iPad and have it transcribe your spoken words into printed text. To see a demonstration, watch this YouTube video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfGdDixoTok) to see both the capabilities and limitations of the Dragon Dictation app.

Amazingly, Dragon Dictation is absolutely free to use. The only requirement is that you need an Internet connection because the app takes your spoken words, transfers them to Dragon Dictation's servers on the Internet, processes your spoken words into text, then sends the text back to your iPad again. The entire process takes a few seconds, but without an Internet connection, you won't be able to use the Dragon Dictation app at all.

Accuracy is surprisingly high. The slower you speak, the higher the accuracy. The faster you speak, the lower the accuracy. Unlike older voice recognition systems that required a training period, you can start using the Dragon Dictation app right away. Just tap the screen to start recording and tap the screen when you're done.

After the Dragon Dictation app has transcribed your text, you can copy and paste it into another app, such as Pages, or e-mail the text to your main computer where you can copy and paste it into any word processor document. With Dragon Dictation and an Internet connection, you can dictate to your iPad and ignore typing almost altogether.

The Hazards of Depending on Others

For most people, picking a product that eventually dies may be disruptive, but it's easy enough to switch to a competitor and go on with your life. However, if you're running a company that relies on another company's products, switching to a rival product can be more costly.

NSBasic (www.nsbasic.com), a company that sells a BASIC compiler for mobile devices, has found this out the hard way. They created a BASIC compiler for Windows CE devices, which morphed into a compiler for Windows Mobile 6.5 devices—then Microsoft announced that Windows Mobile 6.5 is dead, killing the future of NSBasic's BASIC compiler for Windows Mobile 6.5.

NSBasic also had a BASIC compiler for PalmOS. Then Palm switched to webOS and now NSBasic's PalmOS compiler is dead.

NSBasic had a BASIC compiler for Symbian OS that ran on Nokia smartphones. Unfortunately, Nokia recently announced that Symbian OS is dead and it is switching to a Linux-based operating system called MeeGo, which means NSBasic's compiler for Symbian OS is also dead.

NSBasic tried releasing a BASIC compiler for the iPhone, but when Apple refused to allow any apps that could run interpreted code (partially to protect against viruses and Trojan horses and partially to force developers to use Apple's free Xcode programming tools instead), NSBasic had to dump their iPhone BASIC compiler.

NSBasic's products are actually very good; they just have the misfortune of supporting operating systems that either die or get blocked from further development. If you're thinking of starting a company that heavily relies on another company's products, choose carefully or you could suffer the fate of NSBasic.

Perhaps this is why Apple doesn't want to rely on Adobe's Flash for app development and browser interaction, because then Adobe would have control over the iPhone and iPad and not Apple. As the fate of NSBasic demonstrates, depending too much on another company is rarely a reliable business strategy.

* * *

There are multiple ways to transfer files off a Macintosh hard disk, but one simple way is to connect two Macintosh computers together using a FireWire cable. On the Macintosh that holds the data you want to copy, click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences to open the System Preferences window.



Figure 3. The Startup Disk icon appears under the System category.

Click the Startup Disk icon under the System category, and when the Startup Disk window appears, click the Target Disk Mode button. The next time you start up a Macintosh in Target Disk Mode, it won't boot up but will just act like an external hard disk.



Figure 4. The Target disk Mode button lets you treat a Macintosh as an external hard disk.

If you have a second Macintosh hooked up to your first one through a FireWire cable, you can now copy entire folders from the Target Disk Mode Macintosh to the second Macintosh.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

- Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470009233?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470009233),
- Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702),
- Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/)

product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468), Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541*),

- Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050*),
- Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593*),
- My New Mac (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646*),
- My New iPhone (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956*),
- Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894*).

When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (*www.plimus.com/jsp/download_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang*), using the techniques he learned from a professional Wall Street day trader.

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method." (*www.15minutemoviemethod.com/*) Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The ComputerTutor: Technology Solutions

"Business Cards, Labels and More"

by Rob Spahitz

Last week we completed using Word 2010 to create a great resume if you're looking for a new job. This week we'll look at some supporting documents: business cards and labels.

Last week we completed using Word 2010 to create a great resume if you're looking for a new job. This week we'll look at some supporting documents: business cards and labels.

Business Cards

When you meet people on the street, sometimes you'd like to share contact information. One thing that employment experts often suggest is that you network when looking for job opportunities. So if you meet people that you'd like to keep in touch with later, you could either scramble to find a pen and paper (or offer to give out your personal cell phone number by calling another cell phone and hanging up to let them capture your number), or you could print some fancy cards to let them know who you are.

A few things you need to know about business cards. Obviously, they are much smaller than your standard piece of paper. They often use a heavier "card stock" than standard paper, and they should have limited amounts of information. What I've found over the years is that most business cards are missing one thing: Why do I care about that person! I'll get to that later. For now, let's see how Word 2010 can help us to make business cards.

Normally, Word lets you start to create documents using a virtual page that translates to about 8-1/2 x 11 inches in size (what's called American Letter style, or just Letter style). How big is a business card? Well, if you check various printer guides, you see that they are typically 2 x 3-1/2 inches. There are reasons to follow the standard and reasons to stray from that. Let me explain.

When people collect business cards, they will often put them into a stack for easier reference later. When you follow the standard, this makes it easier for the recipient to add it to the collection of other cards. That person can easily organize them and possibly put them into containers designed to quickly scan through the collection. However, that also means that if the person collects many cards, yours will likely get lost in the shuffle, and the person will not necessarily contact you as needed because it will take too long to find you.

There are typically three solutions to this dilemma. One option is to use a thicker card stock so that when the person flips through the cards, it tends to stop on yours. Another is to use a full-color card, where the color bleeds to the edge like a standard magazine cover. While the person is scanning the cards, the colored edges will tend to stand out from the other white cards. Finally, you can use an odd-sized card. This option will certainly make your card stand out from

the rest since it won't fit into the standard deck. You could make it 1/4-inch higher or 1/4-inch wider or even a tiny bit smaller, or bigger on one end and smaller on the other. You could even make it about 80 percent taller and fold it in half, usually with the card information on the inside like a tiny greeting card. However, be forewarned that since they will not fit quite right into a standard card carrier, some people may find it sufficiently offensive that they will simply discard it.

OK, so let's see what we can do with Word. One nice option is to use the Business Card template. For this, go to Word 2010's file tab and select New. In the lower section, Office Templates, one option is Business cards. Select that and it will present a window of options related to that topic. In this case, it offers just one: "Print business cards." Select that and Word will go online to locate a collection of templates related to that, as seen in Figure 1. If you do not have an Internet connection, you'll have to use the other option I describe below: build your own.

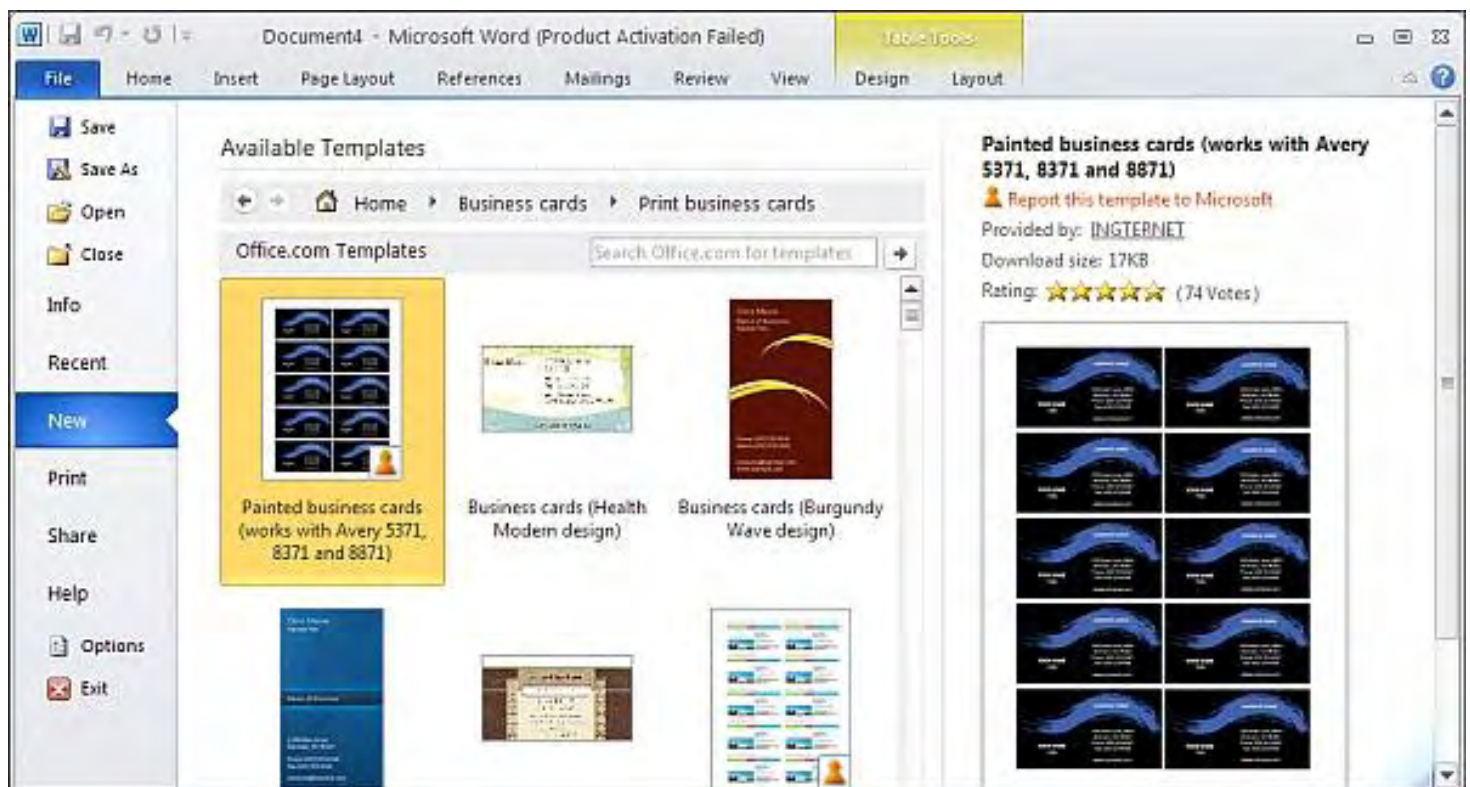


Figure 1. Word 2010 Business Card Templates.

I've decided to choose the second one in the picture above: "Health Modern design." When you select it, the panel on the right is replaced with more information about that selection. If you like the choice, click on the adjacent Download button to load it into a new document. What you'll see is a page of 10 card images on the first page, as seen in Figure 2, and 10 more on the second page for the reverse side of the card. It will include lines to show you where to cut after you print on some thick letter stock.



Figure 2. Business Card Front.

If you choose this option, you'll want to change the information. One thing I don't like about the template is that the information does not carry over from one card to the next. That means that after you update the information in the first card, you'll need to manually copy the contents, select the contents of the second card and paste, then the third card and paste, etc. I guess that once you have all 10 cards right, they should be good for quite a while so maybe that's not so bad, but in a future article we'll look at ways to improve this, either through fields or with macros forms.

One observation about the way this template works is that it was created as a collection of objects. Although it's not obvious, the alignment marks are actually set up as a picture taking up the entire page. The background of the card, as expected, is a picture the size of a printed business card. In addition, the logo, personal information and Web site listed as text on the card are also objects designed to accept text. As you select any of these objects, Word 2010 changes to add a tab for Tools and a sub tab called Format, showing information such as that seen in Figures 3 and 4, which depend on the type of object you are selecting.

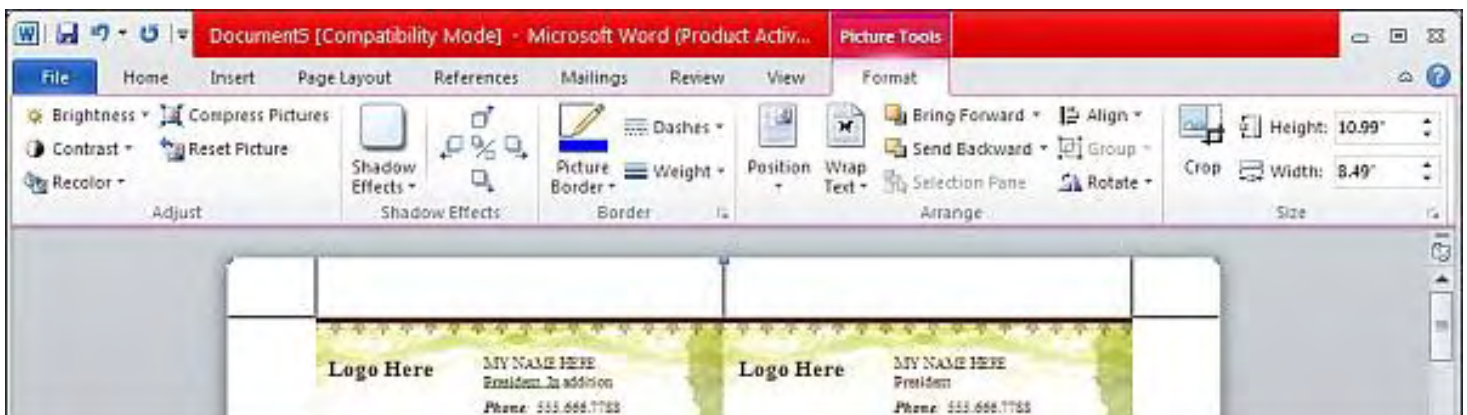


Figure 3. Object Formatting for Pictures.

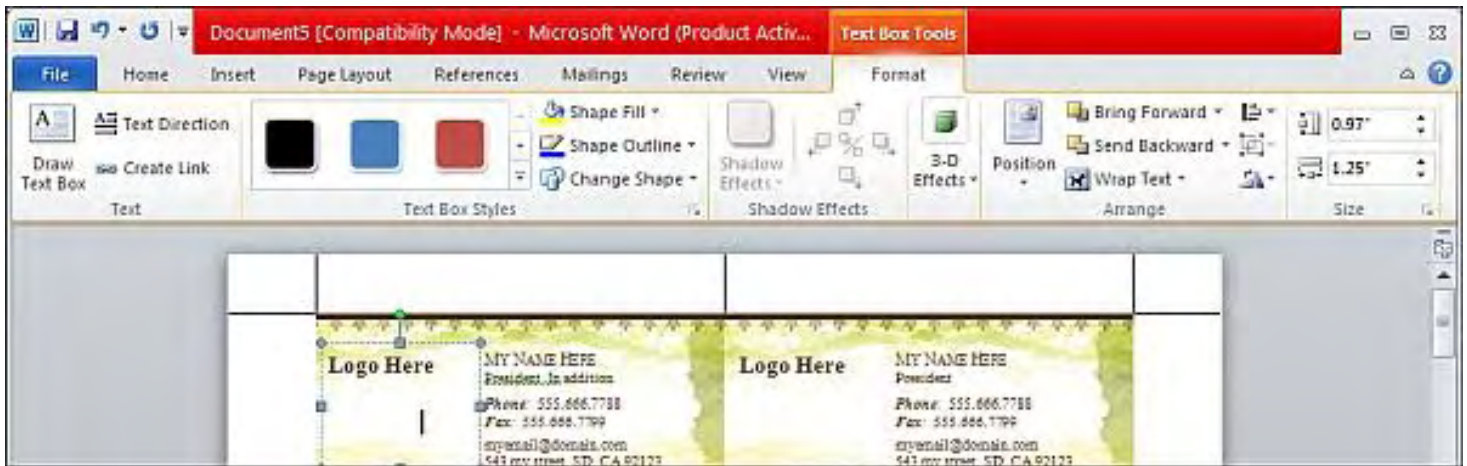


Figure 4. Object Formatting for Text Boxes.

Although all of this works, and the pieces can be created using the Insert tab's choices, let's explore another way to create a card.

Custom Business Cards

OK, let's start from scratch. When we're done, we can save this as a template and give it to our friends.

Open a new blank document. Since we'll need to add cut-lines that stretch beyond the ends of the card, let's start by adjusting the margins. On the Page Layout tab, in the Page Setup group box, select Margins and pick Custom Margins at the bottom. When the window appears, change all margins to zero, and then click the OK button.

Next we'll set up a table to hold the border and cards. We'll make it look like the above templates with two columns and five rows of cards. Add the borders, and we get four columns and seven rows. Proceed to the Insert tab and select Table and mouse over the displayed grid until it highlights four columns and seven rows. Alternately you can choose Insert Table and in the dialog box, enter four columns and seven rows, and then click on the OK button.

Doing some quick math, we know that cards are going to be 2 by 3-1/2 inches. With two columns of 3-1/2 inches, that takes up seven inches of paper, and with five rows of two inches, that takes up 10 inches. For letter-sized paper, which is 8-1/2 x 11 inches, that leaves 1-1/2 inches for the left and right edges (3/4-inch each side) and one inch for the top and bottom (1/2-inch each side). Now let's adjust the cells.

When the table was added, it should have also been selected and you should have a new Table Tools tab. If not, click in the first cell of the table to see that. Beneath that tab you should see the Design and Layout tabs. Click on the Layout tab, as seen in Figure 5, so we can work on the grid size.

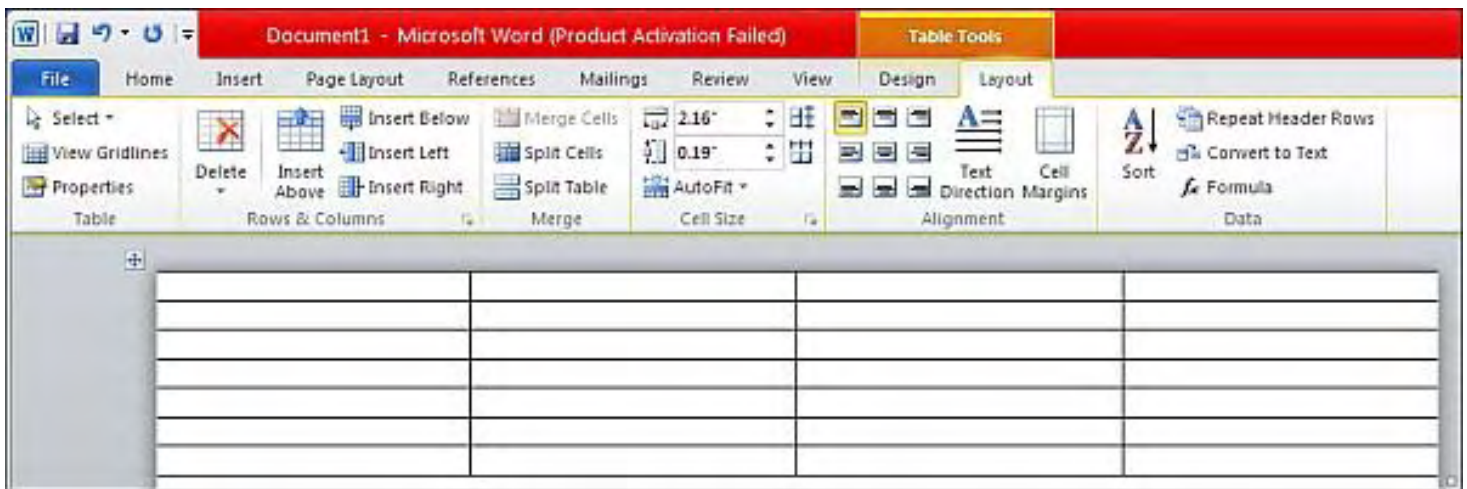


Figure 5. Table Layout Options.

In the Cell Size group box, the first two items represent the size of the current column and row, respectively. Let's change that to match our numbers above. Change 2.16 to .75 and change .19 to .5. After you leave those fields, you should see the grid size change. Let's keep going and adjust the second and third cells along the top to each contain 3.5, then the last cell to contain .75. Make sure to do each cell separately or Word will assume you want to change only the cells and not the entire columns. Alternately, at the top of the column the selection arrow will change to point down and you can select the whole column or multiple columns. Note: For some reason, when I do this, I get a tiny bit left over on the right edge. Since it also shows in the preview mode, I will assume that this is a problem with how Word is rounding decimal values. To adjust this, change the two end cells to .79, which seems to help fill the gap and leaves the card widths intact.

Now go down to the last row in the table and change the height to .5, then all the remaining rows to 2. An easy way here is to click-and-drag from rows two down to the second to last, then choose Select from the Table group box and pick Select Row. Of course, you could have also dragged your mouse to pick all of the cells you wanted. Note that when multiple rows are selected, the column size box will be empty because there are multiple values and Word chooses not to show anything if there are multiple values for a single field.

With all of that set, you should have a nice grid, ready for you to place images and text into the center parts of the grid.

First a few administrative issues: One is that the last grid row wrapped to the next page. The problem is that after the table we have a place for you to continue typing. One solution to this is to make the next text very small. So go to the end of the document, after the table, and in the Home tab, Font Group box, change the font size to 1. Since that's not an option in the drop-down list, simply type it. The blinking cursor will be really small. Next, go to the last row of the table and adjust the row height to something a little smaller than .5, like .42 (or something that caused the second page to go away.) Even though the height of this box is a bit small, it doesn't matter since that piece will be discarded when you cut the cards.

Another issue is that these cards will be printed on full-sized paper; unless you get special card stock with perforation around the card edges, you'll need to cut them yourself. And unless you

are very careful with your cuts, the grid lines will show on the edges of the cards, making them look very unprofessional. For casual business cards, that's not a big deal, but for business meetings, a sloppy presentation could just lose you a sale or an interview. Let's fix that.

Rather than hide all of the grid lines, we'll hide only the ones that surround the cards. The ones around the border will still appear so we can line up a straight edge there and use a straight-edge razor knife or paper-cutter to cut at the proper spots. Also, after you cut off the edges, it will be difficult to realign those pieces to find the right places to cut, so I will suggest using a very light gray box around each card. Most people won't notice it, but you can use it for lining up the straight edge for when you cut.

To do this, use your mouse to select the 10 cells where the cards will go. The selection will look a bit strange, showing blue bars rather than blue boxes. That's because the cell are currently set at a small font size and have no text in them. Now change the borders. Proceed to the Design tab and the Draw Borders group box. Click on the Pen Color drop-down list and select a light shade of gray, such as the third one below the white under Theme Colors, which shows "White, Background 1, Darker 25%." Next, go to the Table Styles group box and on the right click on the Borders drop-down list. Since we want all grid lines related to the selection to change colors, select All Borders. You should now see all of the borders of the cards showing up as light gray.

With the card structure in place, the last part is to create an awesome card design in the first card cell of the table. Use any parts of Word that you think will help, including text, colors, fonts, paragraph alignment, tabs (Ctrl+Tab within a cell) and even images. When you're done, you'll see something like Figure 6.



Figure 6. Sample Card with Gray Borders.

Just be careful when adding the text since if the size exceeds the room in the cell, it may enlarge the cell. So when you're done, make sure that you still have only one page of cards. Anyway, I'm sure that most of you can do better than mine, so be creative and enjoy the many features offered by Word 2010.

The final step is to take your mouse and move it up near the top-left corner of the completed cell. The arrow will change from your standard arrow into a solid-block black arrow pointing up

to the right. At that point, click and you will select the entire cell. You can also use Table Tools/ Layout/Table/Select/Select Cell. With that selected, copy (Ctrl+C), select the remaining nine cells (drag the mouse so all 10 are selected) and paste (Ctrl+V). You now have a page of cards ready for printing. Do a quick preview in the File tab's Print section, and if it looks good, print it.

Oh, and if you expect this to be a base card that will use additional customization depending on how you use it (for example, with your name, address and phone number, but different titles— Word Expert, Excel Expert, ComputerTutor, etc.—depending on who you plan to give it to), then you may want to save it as a template. For this, under the File tab, click the Save As option and enter a name to save and, below the name, select Word Template, as seen in Figure 7.

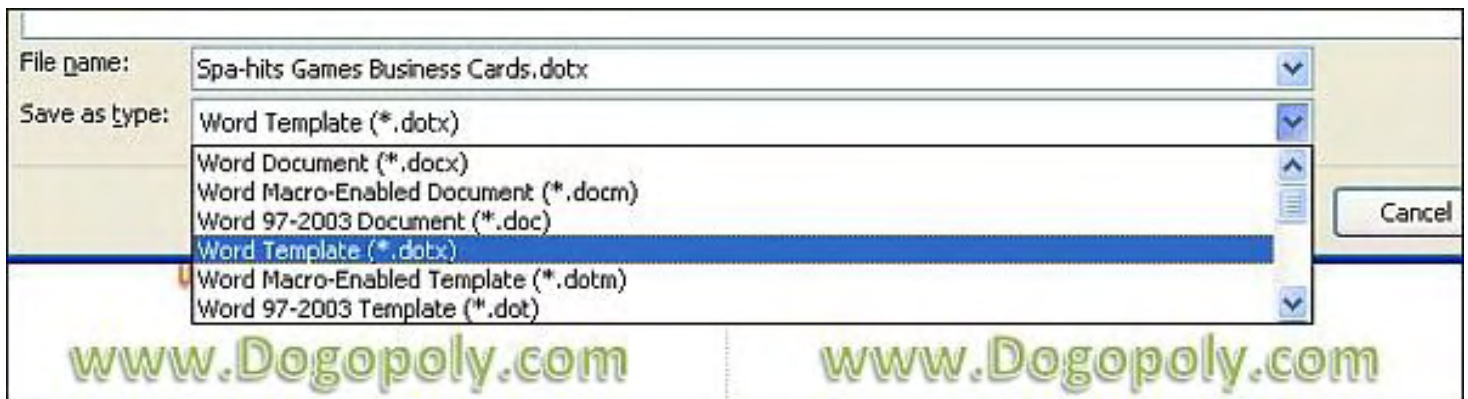


Figure 7. Saving a Document Template.

Note that this is saved without macros, which we'll get to in a future article. Since we didn't create any macros, that's not a problem. If we had macros that we wanted to keep, we should save it as a Macro-Enabled Template.

One last thing: The custom template is not necessarily better than the predefined templates, but it allows you to have full control over customizing, rather than taking something that may not be quite right and then ripping it apart. Both options have their merits. And since I didn't show you to set it up so that one change affects all parts, I'll present that in next week's article. Until then, make yourself some awesome cards, hand them out to people you meet, and hopefully get yourself an awesome new job. Oh, and if you need to hire a well-paid assistant, feel free to think of me!

Rob has been in the computer industry for over 25 years and is currently a part-time teacher, offering classes in Excel, Access, Visual Basic, and a variety of other technical tools. He has loved *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and can be contacted at RSpahitz@Dogopoly.com.

Looking for a great boardgame? Grab a copy from DOGOPOLY.com (dogopoly.com) and have a dog-gone great time.



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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

“The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.” by Charles Carr



Pad Praise—The introduction of the Apple iPad heralds a new era in enterprise mobility; Get Cash for That New or Used iPhone 3G—Cash for iPhones is ready for sellers; Minting Money-Savvy Kids—Combining modern technology with old-fashioned money lessons; Earphones for Bassoholics—A review of the Remix Remote.

Pad Praise

According to CommonTime, makers of mSuite (www.commontime.com/mSuite), a mobile platform that supports device management, remote device control, enterprise grade security, database connectors and mobile applications:

Mobile devices are constantly changing. From the large, monochromatic PDAs of the 1990s to the sleek and stylish smartphones of recent years, handsets have constantly evolved and improved to keep up with changing business requirements. The introduction of the Apple iPad heralds a new era in enterprise mobility in the form of the adaptable touchscreen tablet PC. Tablet PCs have been available for years, but the iPad's design, usability and promising future developments have brought tablet PCs to the forefront for both business and personal use.



"We see the iPad as a key device for the enterprise," comments CommonTime CEO Ian Knight. "The iPad brings a wealth of new options to both newcomers and veterans of mobile working—it blends the mobility of a smartphone with the usability of a laptop to provide the perfect solution for a number of mobile working practices that may have previously been overlooked."

Following the success of the iPad, a plethora of other tablets have been announced by various manufacturers including HP, Dell, Nokia and Asus. Details of a Google tablet have not yet been officially announced, but Google CEO Eric Schmidt recently confirmed that his company has been developing an Android-based tablet.

"At the moment, we can't know for certain how other tablet PCs will be received," Ian Knight continued. "If the popularity of the iPad is anything to go by, these smartphone-laptop hybrids will be here to stay. It's an exciting time to be at the cutting edge of enterprise mobility."

Check out their demos (www.commontime.com/downloads/).

Get Cash for That New or Used iPhone 3G

Jennifer Wezensky of JW Public Relations writes in this week:

Cash for iPhones is offering top prices for used and broken iPhone 3Gs, with an expected influx of iPhone 3G sellers with the release of the iPhone 4G.

According to Wezensky, Cash for iPhones is offering \$400 for the iPhone 3G 32GB in excellent condition and \$200 for the 16GB in excellent condition. Prices vary for used and broken iPhones.

"Apple is not offering trade-ins for the old iPhones, and with a reported 600,000 backorders for the 4.0, many sellers are expected to flood the market with their old iPhones," said Wezensky. "Cash for iPhones provides online quotes and sends the pre-paid packaging for the seller to use for free shipping. Sellers are paid by check or PayPal, whichever they prefer."

Check it out for yourself at Cash for iPhones (cashforiphones.com). Note that the company also operates www.cashforberrys.com, www.cashforsmartphones.com and www.cashforlaptops.com.

Minting Money-Savvy Kids

According to the FamilyMint.com CEO Jeff Eusebio :

Just five percent of Americans learn how to manage money before graduating from high school and 18-24 year-olds have become the fastest-growing segment filing for bankruptcy. Americans, pulled into a recession tied to hopes a housing bubble would enable them to spend greater sums, continue racking up debt faster than savings.

Among parents with children ages 23-28, a recent 2010 Families & Money survey found 41 percent of parents still providing some level of financial support to their children, with just 35 percent expecting their grown children to achieve financial independence by age 30. FamilyMint.com (familymint.com) (also www.facebook.com/FamilyMintempowers) aims to empower kids to take charge of their own finances.

Eusebio has five kids while his friend, co-founder and president Bob Masterson, has eight (13 between them). They quickly saw the value of an online tool that helps kids take charge of their money, improving their behavior while empowering them to take responsibility for and manage their dollars wisely.

According to Eusebio, within weeks of launching FamilyMint.com, the site had picked up more than 2,500 registered users from 46 states. The firm offers a free version with basic features and a premium version for \$4.95 a month (\$49.50 per year).

"We literally see a change in behavior in kids as focusing on setting and achieving goals becomes a natural part of their daily financial lives," Masterson said. "Our kids can accumulate literally hundreds of dollars in their rooms and they always want things. FamilyMint teaches them how to save, budget and plan. As soon as I heard the idea I thought, 'It's a no brainer.' Kids need this."

HomeSchool blogger Lori Lynn tried FamilyMint with her kids and wrote, "After years of me preaching, 'Spend your money wisely. Don't buy that junk. Think about where you are spending your money!' FamilyMint *showed* the boys exactly all those things in the matter of a few weeks."

"Constantly wanting more than they or their parents can afford doesn't make any one happy," Eusebio said, "but rather makes them feel out of control. A child who can use a simple online calculator to figure out precisely how much to save each week to buy a dream toy or gadget quickly takes charge of finances and realizes how simple it can be to achieve goals."

He recalls his 9-year-old asking him, "What is interest?" when he was setting up interest rates

for his kids in the tool and being amazed at experiencing the teaching opportunities the tool provides.

A major U.S. bank earlier this year changed its policies regarding debit cards after thousands of young people nationwide used debit cards that racked up large delinquent fees for going pennies over their balances. Eusebio says the goal of FamilyMint "is to combine modern technology with old-fashioned lessons like the importance of building a savings cushion and using virtual envelopes to help save money for bigger goals."

Earphones for Bassoholics

Reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

V-MODA is a SoCal company specializing in highly fashionable earphones. Its earlier products—Bass Fréq and Vibe—earned top marks (5 globes) from this reviewer. In hindsight, however, such ratings might have been a mistake because readers could infer that these older models are as good as the company's latest and greatest Remix earphones. That would be a mistake, though, and here's why.

To begin, V-MODA produces two Remix models (both of which, like previous models, go into your ear canals)—Remix Audio (www.v-moda.com/headphones/remix_audio.aspx) (\$79.00) and Remix Remote (www.v-moda.com/headphones/remix.aspx) (\$99.99). This review focuses on the Remix Remote, which is distinguished by its built-in remote-control module with a microphone, and by its casing's color—available only in black (aka "Nero"; figure below) from V-MODA and additionally available in silver from Apple's online and retail stores. (Remix Audio comes only in two eye-catching flavors of red.)



The stylish metallic Remix Remote comes in black (shown) or silver and features a built-in module housing a microphone for cell phone users plus remote controls for volume and pause/play.

Remix Remote stands apart from its predecessors and other brands on the key criterion of audio quality. These earphones' official frequency response—5 Hz to 24 kHz—is appreciably broader than the range of V-MODA's previous products and comparably priced competitors. Remix Remote produces an audio experience best described as addictively clear, detailed, and authentic with—for those of us who favor bass guitars and string instruments—gloriously unmuddled bass that is front and center without overwhelming the listener. After working with these earphones, switching back to my Vibe, Bass Fréq, or other brand earphones felt like a considerable downgrade.

In my standard tests, one of the key determinants is how readily the bassist in each track can be discerned from vocalists and other musicians. My consistent impression is that Remix Remote qualitatively surpasses its older siblings on this criterion. An unbiased 20-something collaborator confirmed this, asserting that listening with Remix Remote was akin to attending a live concert. Users whose listening experience has been limited to MP3 players' standard earphones will be delightedly surprised to discover percussion, brass, string, and/or other instruments in their favorite tunes while using Remix Remote.

The audio technology underlying Remix Remote's outstanding audio quality is pretty much the same as in previous V-MODA products—9mm V-MASQUE dynamic neodymium rare earth magnet drivers, a 24k gold-plated 3.5 mm (1/8-inch) stereo plug, BEATPORT air flow system,

and Bass Level Isolating Soft Silicone (BLISS) in-your-ear-canal sleeves (two sets of four pairs—extra small, small, medium, and large—come standard; one set is black, the other clear). These sleeves, in my product tests, outperform competitors' silicone or foam tips—they retain their comfortableness over continuous hours of use and effectively block public transit buses' and trolleys' loud noises that are plain-as-day audible with other brands' tips. If a good seal in your ear canal is what's critical for delivering great bass, BLISS sleeves must provide a truly superior seal.

Readers familiar with V-MODA products might be wondering about Remix Remote's construction quality and durability. A reliable source recently told me that Vibe had a relatively high frequency of cable breakage, and my own experience was consistent with this—two evaluation units suffered cable breaks with only ordinary, non-abusive, usage. To address this potentially serious issue, Remix Remote's 45.5-inch cables are "Kevlar reinforced," the stereo plug has been redesigned to reduce the effects of stress, and the junction between the cables and earphone casings likewise has been beefed up (details at V-MODA (www.v-moda.com/quality.aspx)).

But wait, there's more. V-MODA backs Remix Remote with a "premier" warranty (shop.v-moda.com/t-returns.aspx)—two years, repair or replace, no charge for customers who purchased the earphones from an authorized dealer; and Replay Replacement Program—no-questions-asked, 50 percent lifetime discount. They say, "All we ask is that you send the headphones (or what's left of them) to us and we'll e-mail you a 50 percent off coupon toward a new set of [Remix Remote] earphones." To my knowledge, these backings presently are unique in the earphones industry.

In addition to the hi-fidelity audio quality and generous warranty, I like Remix Remote's namesake module. It worked as advertised in my tests with a MacBook Pro—the remote's upper button increased the playing tune's volume while the lower one decreased it; the middle button paused the tune after a single press and resumed the tune after pressing once again. Pressing the remote's middle button twice quickly advanced to the next track in the currently selected playlist, while pressing thrice quickly retreated to the previous one. A caveat is that the remote module has limited compatibility ([/www.V-MODA.com/compatibility](http://www.V-MODA.com/compatibility)); supported music players, cell phones and computers are listed on the packaging and at the link site. If your music player, cell phone and/or computer is missing from the list, Remix Audio might be more appropriate.

One more detail—in my tests the remote's middle button had a sweet spot for activation; i.e., this button worked more reliably when I used a prominent fingernail than when I used the fleshy tip of my finger (this could be an issue for users with big hands). All told, the remote module definitely comes in handy when your music player is sequestered in a pocket or backpack.

Likable accessories include (at no additional cost) a shirt clip and earhooks (to which you can attach the equal-length portion of Remix Remote's cables) for greater stability while working out, a black cloth carrying pouch, and a user's manual that is printed in English only (available in eight other languages at V-MODA's Web site) and emphasizes safe listening (page 1 begins with "ROCK SAFELY" and the rest of the page details the importance of protecting your hearing and your safety while maximizing your listening enjoyment).

I do have a few minor quibbles. The microphone is Remix Remote's weak link. Its cell phone

compatibility is limited to the most recent iPhone models (3GS) plus BlackBerry Curve, Tour, Storm, Pearl, and Flip, and Palm Treo Pro and Pre. Additionally, the microphone's audio fidelity is only ordinary; in tests with an iPhone 3GS, the call recipient said that the caller's voice sounded "distant" even with Remote Remix' microphone positioned at mouth level. Remote Remix's package comes in one of those dreadful blisters made of not-readily recyclable plastic that requires surgical instruments and a superhero's muscle power to open. Lastly, the left and right sides' identifier letters (L and R) are needlessly difficult to spot and read (if only those letters had been positioned on the black portion of the earphones' casings).

In conclusion, Remote Remix's price tag is higher than many other earphones', and its microphone does leave some room for improvement. However, my guess is that if you take the plunge, you will be amply and repeatedly rewarded with a listening experience that will leave you never wanting to go back to the lower priced or standard equipment earphones you used before.



In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputerEdge* and *ComputerScene* Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, including two widely-read columns each week for San Diego's *North County Times* newspaper.

Carr has covered such diverse topics as pesticide use in area schools, invasive background checks for county volunteers, asthma awareness, the debate over standards-based grading, potential vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, and Southern California's devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires. He has also written many humorous pieces.

Carr has also edited dozens of stories and articles written by others which have appeared in major publications and web sites across the country.

He has been a contributor and technical advisor to *L.A. and San Diego Parent* magazines and receives dozens of requests a year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important events in the tech world.

Carr has judged many writing competitions including San Diego Press Club and Time-Warner Communications contests and was sole judge for the national NAPPA Tech Toys awards for five years (which his kids really appreciated). He was recently a judge for the national "Poetry Out Loud" competition.

He has won many writing accolades, including Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Consumer Writing and Best Arts and Entertainment, and has repeatedly taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr will soon publish his first book, *What a World*, a collection of his best writings.

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

"A Time of Transition" by Jack Dunning



It is again time for things to transition at ComputerEdge, and time to develop another, less time-consuming way to publish.

I recently Googled myself to see what would come up. I threw in the terms "computer" and "magazine" because I knew that it would eliminate the more famous "Jack Dunning" authors. I knew that there would be a number of hits because I do publish a good bit on the Web and *ComputerEdge* does have a reasonable page ranking. I found that some of my articles had been incorporated into other Web sites. (I would have preferred them linking to the appropriate page on our site, but at least they gave *ComputerEdge* credit. The people who just steal editorial are much more difficult to find since they don't come up in a search.) What surprised me was finding a 1985 article from the Los Angeles Times: "'Byte Buyer Challenged by New Computer Paper.'" (articles.latimes.com/1985-08-06/business/fi-4974_1) (Talk about nostalgia.) I was impressed because I know it wasn't posted in 1985 when it was written. The World Wide Web wasn't proposed until 1990.

That was 25 years ago and *ComputerEdge* (originally *The Byte Buyer*) had a good 25 years of printing. Like so many other publications, the paper version of *ComputerEdge* fell in 2007 to the pressures of a changing market and the high cost of printing. Independent computer dealers were falling victim to the big box stores and Internet sales. As I stated in that 1985 article, the backbone of our business has always been the local computer business. That hasn't changed—only today there are far fewer of them.

The current economic climate has made it even tougher on our sponsors. Businesses and individuals buy and upgrade computers when they are confident about their futures. Uncertainty makes them wait. The doubt that has been seeded into people's minds by the current state of our government is the worst that I've seen in my lifetime. People are hesitant to invest in the future, and computers are a purchase that represents a belief in the future. *ComputerEdge* sponsors are experiencing the worst times that they have ever felt, thus most are having trouble making ends meet. The bottom line is that it is again time for things to transition at *ComputerEdge*.

While *ComputerEdge* certainly keeps me busy, it does not generate enough for me to continue to put other projects (with greater potential) on the back burner. It is time for me to develop another (less time consuming) way to publish. I'm not sure how I'm going to approach it, but I'm giving myself until the end of this year to get it done. I would like *ComputerEdge* and its archives to continue as a Web resource, but it will need to be on a different basis.

I truly enjoy the weekly job of putting together the issue, researching topics and writing articles and columns for *ComputerEdge*. The regular readers who send their kind words and/or straighten me out when I'm wrong are the ones who keep me motivated to do more. Every month tens of thousands of people visit *ComputerEdge* and use the site as a resource. They are unique in that they are not here to socialize or make noise. They have a particular interest in

computers and the Internet and either want to see what's new, learn a little more, or contribute a tidbit or two to our articles.

Unlike many people, I'm confident about the future. (Maybe it's my nature.) I have more projects that I would like to explore and develop than I have time. For me it is a new beginning. After almost three decades I cannot allow *ComputerEdge* to dominate my life anymore. The plan is to develop a way for the site to continue without such dependence upon me. I don't know what form it will take—that's one of the reasons for announcing it at such an early date—but the change must occur.

Do I have regrets? If I lived a life of no regrets, I never would have started *ComputerEdge* in the first place. No one has perfect knowledge, and if you're going to take risks, then there will be some regrets. (People who say they have no regrets either have never taken any chances or they are liars—or both.) The best you can do is pick the type of regrets you will have. I've always wanted to regret the chances that I took and not the things I wished I had done. In the end, I want to be able to say that it's been a good ride. I know I can say that right now, but, of course, it's not over yet.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

"Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns." by ComputerEdge Staff

"Webinar Bandwidth Problem," "Digital Dave's Tip,"
"Spam E-mail Topic," "Junk Food Makers Set the Table
for Online Gaming"

Webinar Bandwidth Problem

[Regarding Pete Choppin's June 11 article, "Webinars: Collaboration on the Web":]

[Pete] missed one important aspect that can affect the overall process. The County of San Diego presented its Aging Summit conference a couple of weeks ago over the Internet. The problem occurred when some type of bandwidth problem occurred on some of North County's Web-based Internet providers during the presentation. This limited the bandwidth, at least for the site I was responsible for, to approximately .15MB and that was intermittent. Not a good beginning in attempting to showcase a new technology.

-Don Pillar

Don,

Good point. Bandwidth can be an issue if you are hurting for it. Your IT department should be very bandwidth aware, and I would think they would be able to advise a specific office or company what the capabilities are to hold a Webinar. The same goes for a home. You would need at least a DSL connection to be able to participate in a Webinar that is transmitting video traffic.

If you want a good ballpark estimate of what will be required for your system to participate in a Webinar, go to the Appia Services bandwidth requirements Web site (www.appiaservices.com/pages/products-and-services/collaboration/appiavideocommunicator/bandwidthrequirements.html) and follow the instructions.

-Pete

Digital Dave's Tip

[Regarding the June 18 Digital Dave column, where Dave offered a tip on creating a directory of all 271 Windows troubleshooting how-to statements:]

I have a one-year-old Vista PC upgraded to Windows 7 several months ago. I followed the instructions in your [June 18] tip and was able to accomplish . . . nothing! I would like to have what you suggest. Could you be a bit more precise in your instructions so I might accomplish this task?

Thanks in advance,

-Chuck Homes, San Diego

Hi, Chuck,

It's difficult to know where you are going wrong, but there are a couple of sticking points.

First, the new name for the new created folder must be in the form:

Tools.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}

The Tools portion of the name (before the dot) can be anything you choose (Tools, Help, Troubleshooting, etc.), but everything after must be exactly as shown, including the dot (.) and curly brackets.

Perhaps it would be easier to create the new folder on the Desktop by right-clicking on the Desktop and selecting New/Folder. Then you can cut and paste the above in as the new name (or right-click Rename, and then paste the above).

Warning: Do not attempt this in any version of Windows other than Windows 7! It could create an infinite loop!

-Digital Dave, ComputerEdge

Thanks, Dave! With your instructions it only took me about three minutes to get me a usable Tools Icon on my Desktop. This 80-year-old man can do New Folders, Cut and Paste, and that stuff easily.

Thanks so much for your attention and time.

-Chuck Homes

Spam E-mail Topic

[Regarding the June 18 Digital Dave column:]

Regarding looking at the message header in Outlook: Instead of messing with the Registry, all you need to do in Outlook is double-click on the message title in the Inbox to make the message full screen. Then click on View/Options and you'll see the message header window at the bottom of the Options box with all of the sender information in it.

-John, Encinitas, CA

Junk Food Makers Set the Table for Online Gaming

[Regarding the June 18 Worldwide News & Product Reviews column:]

It is not the nanny state's responsibility to control our children, it is the parents' [responsibility]. Parents need to be totally aware of the Web sites their children are going to and should be

educated as to the risks. UC Davis needs to be educating parents, not lobbying for more government.

-Marcus, AL

ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the article/column. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at ceeditor@computoredge.com.

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

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